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THE PATH OF GOLD

BY

CARRIE BLAKE MORGAN

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To My Sister

ELLA HIGGINSON

The Path of Gold

An Indian legend, beautiful and old,
Tells how a sinner sought the path of gold

Cast by a midnight moon on waters deep,
And there lay down to his eternal sleep,

With faith that, though the sea his bones should hold,
His deathless soul should mount the path of gold,

And steal unchallenged through the gates of heaven,
Its guilt forgotten, or, perchance, forgiven.

O low-hung moon! O quivering path of light!
The savage legend comes to me tonight.

Beside the sea I stand, and at my feet
The sands of earth and heaven's gold do meet.

Would that I held the simple faith and hope
That bore the Indian's soul up yon bright slope!

But even as my prayer is cried aloud,
Thy face, O moon, is hidden with a cloud;

Thy light is gone; the waters, cold and gray,
Clutch at my feet and chill all hope away.

Oh, can it be that souls in sin grown old
Can never find the shining Path of Gold?

No Man Hath Right

No man hath right to rear a prison wall
About himself, and then to sit therein
And sigh for freedom, gone beyond recall,
And make his moan for things that might have
been.

Nor hath he right to build himself a stair,
By which to scale his prison's high rampart,
When every stroke must mean some soul's despair,
And every step a bleeding human heart.

As Rosebuds Will

The dewdrop loved the rosebud, and the rosebud loved
the dew,
But the frost-king, hoary-headed, came between the
lovers true;

Oh, a million jewels brought he, to entice the rosebud
sweet,
Ten hundred thousand diamonds, and cast them at her
feet.

The dewdrop's tender opals paled before such kingly
show,
The rosebud chose the diamonds, as rosebuds will, you
know.

And now? Oh, well, the sequel can be whispered in a
breath—
She had her hour of splendor, and she paid for it with
death.

A Voiceless Soul

God makes no thing in vain. And yet—Ah, me!
If man should shape, from precious woods and fine,
With skillful touch and art almost divine,
A violin attuned to melody
Of earth and sky, and restless, whispering sea,
And then no bow create,—his work resign,
And give the almost sentient thing no sign
Nor sound to voice its inborn minstrelsy,—
We quick should cry, “That man hath wrought in
vain!”
O Soul of mine, thou must that viol be,
Without a bow! Thou canst not voice the strain
That rends thy chords in effort to be free,
And turns what should be joy to keenest pain.
God makes no thing in vain. And yet—Ah, me!

Life's Song

I would not live too long. Too many years
Are just too many stanzas in life's song:
However sweet the first, men's wearied ears
Turn from the last. I would not live too long.

A Memory

A low-hung moon; a path of silver flame
Across a lonely stream; a whispering wood;
A vigil drear for one who never came;
And all around God's peopled solitude.

Sacred

Deep in each artist's soul some picture lies
That he will never paint for mortal eyes;
And every singer in his heart doth hold
Some sad, sweet tale that he will leave untold.

At Dead of Night

I woke at dead of night. The wind was high;
My white rose-bush was tapping 'gainst the pane
With ghostly finger-tips; a sobbing rain
Made doleful rhythm for my thoughts, and I
Strove vainly not to think, and wondered why
My brain, ghoul-like, must dig where long had lain
The pulseless dead that time and change had slain.
I fear no living thing. But oh! to lie,
And see the gruesome dark within my room
Take eyes and turn on me with yearning gaze!
To hear reproachful voices from the tomb
Of duties unfulfilled,—might well-nigh craze
A stronger brain! God save me from the gloom
Of sleepless hours that stretch between two days!

As I Grow Old

If need be, take my friends, my dole of wealth,
Take faith, and love, and hope, take youth and health;
But while I live, dear God, blight not the flower
Of Reason in my brain! Leave me the power
To string together, on fine threads of gold,
My fairest thoughts, as I grow gray and old.

Come Not at Night

O Death, come not for me at dead of night!
Call not my soul to take its lonely flight
 Through dark and storm unto the world unknown.
But when the golden sun from out the sea
Shall lift his face to light a path for me,
 O Death, come then, and claim me for thine own.

Introspection

O Heart of mine, for shame! to ache, and ache,
Because a few things thou didst love are lost!
What if some treasures, yielded up, have cost
Thee dear?—Is that a sign that thou needst break?

Millions of hearts did ache ere thou didst feel
One stab of pain; for *any* heart can break;
But few can play the game of give and take,
And come out whole from under life's hard heel.

So heart, brace up, and twang thy quivering strings
Into new strength. Ask no more tears of me;
Nor beg of me to voice thy grief for thee.
Poor heart, thou and thy kind are weakling things!

A Thought

God knows success is sweet. And yet He thought
Not best to give the longed-for boon to all,
Lest the desire to win it had been small,
And His most wise design been set at naught.

By contrast's law our estimates are made;
There were no beauty but for ugliness;
No grandeur but for littleness; and less
Of joy in heaven's sunshine but for shade.

So, friend, if you or I must work in vain,
Remember that but for our fruitless toil
Success had missed some portion of her foil.
Let that thought blunt the stab of failure's pain.

Dead Flowers

Send not vain tears to seek a by-gone hour :
No dew can kiss to life a last year's flower.

Limitation

O river, beating 'gainst thy crags alway !
My kin thou art in boundless aspiration :
Thou wouldst take mountain heights within thy sway,
Yet canst not rise above thy banks of clay,—
My kin again, in piteous limitation !

Poverty

Possessing little maketh no man poor :
His poverty is in desiring more.

The Undertone of Pain

O Earth, thy carpet is so green to-day,
I would forget the graves it hides away;
I would not hear the sighs of grief and care
That tremble in thy balmy, sunlit air.

But Nature's touch upon the soul within
Is as the master hand on violin;
And through thy music's softest, sweetest strain
There throbs an endless undertone of pain.

Discontent

I could content myself to be one drop
 Among the myriad drops that swell the breast
 Of life's full sea, if I might ride the crest
Of some proud wave that none can overtop;

If I might catch the sun's sweet morning light,
 When swift he mounts into the day's cool space,
 And paint his tinted clouds upon my face,
And wear the stars upon my breast at night.

But, oh, to lie a hundred fathoms deep,
 Down in a cold, dim cavern of the sea,
 Where no sun-ray can ever come to me,
Where shadows dwell and sightless creatures creep;

To gaze forever up, with straining eyes,
 To where God's day illumines the shining sands,
 To grope, and strive, and reach with pallid hands,
Yet never see the light, and never rise!

I should go mad, but for a still, small voice,
 A pitying voice, that sometimes says to me,
 "It takes so many drops to fill life's sea,
Ye cannot all have places of your choice."

Growing Old

To feel the failing power ; to sit and note
 The slipping cogs within the mental wheel ;
 To strive to hold a thought, and see it steal
Away ; to watch each golden fancy float

Beyond our reach. To be no longer bold,
 And sure, and free ; to falter and to grope ;
 Yet still to strive, and still to feebly hope—
Until the struggle ends, and we are old.

“We Ne’er See Well”

“I would not die unknown to fame,” I said ;

“I feel, within, the power to do and be

Something, if I were but unfettered, free
To work in my own way, by fancy led.

Why must I toil that others may be fed?—

Others who little reck the cost to me,

For ‘none so blind as they who will not see.’

Dear heaven, if I were only free!” I plead.

But when, one day, my hour of freedom came,

I kissed the broken shackles I had lost,

And knew my freedom gained at too great cost ;

And now I neither strive nor long for fame ;

For who can work, with none to help or care ?

And who would win what no dear one may share ?

Jealousy

I would thou wert a rose, and I the tree,
That when I died, thou too might'st die with me.

I would thou wert the earth, and I the sun,
That if my light were quenched, thy race were run.

I would thou wert a star, and I a cloud,
That I, in death, might wind thee in my shroud.

But, oh, to think that thou may'st live instead—
May'st live and love again—when I am dead!

Alas!

The blind god is but snow-blind, after all,
And gets his sight when Love's black night doth fall.

Buried Gems

Though I had drained the fount of knowledge dry,
And heard all stories told by tongue or pen,
I still should yearn to know the thoughts that lie
Unvoiced, unwrit, in graves of nameless men.

A Couplet

A pair of lines—how often we have seen them!—
Like lovers fond, with but a thought between them.

The Skylark

Oh, happy bird! Though well I live and long,
My throat must vainly strive to sing thy song;

My acres broad of woods and waving grain
Are cramped and poor beside thy grand domain;

And all my coined gold can never buy
Thy lease upon the red gold of the sky.

To a Mountain

When God foresaw the littleness of men,
And all our need of object-lessons, then

He smote the pulsing, pregnant womb of earth,
And bade the plain be cleft to give thee birth.

He caused thy rugged head to rear on high,
Where clouds and sun make war within the sky;

And unto thee the mission grand was given
To show how lowly earth may reach toward heaven.

Reading

Just dropping off the harness from our overwearied
thought,
And resting in the beauty that another's brain has
wrought.

To My Dog

Thy speechless tongue, my dog, I envy thee;
Whatever be thy faults in sight of heaven,
The stab of venom'd words thou hast not given,
And so thy dumbness seemeth good to me.

Achievement

"The low sun makes the color," but the high
Has climbed the mighty archway of the sky.

A Warning

Palest gold of early sunrise lit the face of all the land,
Touching into life the hill-tops and the shore of sparkling sand,

Kissing into flame the waters lapping, rippling at
my feet,

Tuning all the soul of nature into harmony complete—

Lighting up a trembling dewdrop on a tinted daisy's
breast,

Till to me it seemed a jewel from some wandering
angel's crest.

Wonderingly the flower I lifted, by poetic fancy drawn,
Bent too near, I breathed upon it—and the heavenly
gem was gone!

Oh, my loved one, angel-hearted, is it strange that drop
of dew

Was to me a potent warning not to bend too near to
you?

One hot breath of passion's impulse, and my love
would be in vain;

You would flee forever from me, in the vanished dew-
drop's train!

The Old Emigrant Road

Aged and desolate, grizzled and still,
It creeps in slow curves round the base of the hill;
Of its once busy traffic is left little trace,
Not a hoof-print or wheel-track is fresh on its face.

Rank brambles encroach on its poor ragged edge,
And bowlders crash down from the mountainside ledge;
The elements join to efface the dim trail,
The torrents of springtime, the winter's fierce gale;

Yet, with pioneer sturdiness, patient and still,
It lingers and clings round the base of the hill;
Outlasting its usefulness, furrowed and gray,
Gaunt phantom of Yesterday, haunting To-day.

To Him Who Waits

All things may come to him who learns to wait,
But oh, the pity when they come too late!

Resignation

The sad-faced sister of Content is she.

When thou hast courted sweet Content in vain,
Hast turned thy back to Joy, thy face to Pain—
Pale Resignation will join hands with thee.

Faith

Faith shuts his eyes and says, "I know! I *know!*"
Because his weakling heart would have it so.

If I Might Choose

If I might choose my meeting-time with Death,
I'd clasp his hand on some sad autumn day,
And with the year's ripe fruit I'd pass away,
If I might time my last faint fleeting breath.

But oh, pale King, thou art no creature's slave!
We may choose much in life, but in the end
Thou makest every mortal will to bend
And break above an open, waiting grave!

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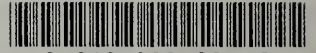
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